

Keen, William W. Human Vivisection [Letter to the Editor]

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Vivisection
Pamphlet

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HUMAN VIVISECTION.

1729 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.,

April 5, 1921.

Mr. Editor:—

In *The Starry Cross* (the Philadelphia Antivivisection journal of which Mr. R. R. Logan is the editor), for March, 1921, is an article of about 2500 words by the associate editor, Mrs. M. F. Lovell, entitled "An Answer to Dr. Keen."

This answer is to my article on "Vivisection" in *The Country Gentleman* for February 12, 1921. In this article, I quoted Mrs. White's much earlier proposal for "Experimenting on human beings." Mrs. Lovell begins by saying: "One of the most common of these [gleams of virtue] is a reluctance to criticize the dead, and seldom, indeed, except by the most unscrupulous, is a direct accusation brought against one who, being no longer in this life, is unable to refute it." As to this general assertion, I need only remark that Pasteur, Lister, Claude Bernard, Brunton, Behring, and scores of other research workers, are constantly "accused" by antivivisectionists, without number, of cruelties and other faults. It is the current coin of their literature. Yet all of these men are "no longer in this life and [are] unable to 'refute' such accusations. It seems, then, that it is a crime to criticize a dead antivivisectionist, but a virtue to lash and misrepresent a dead experimenter. Does not the old adage say, "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander"?

As to the positive inference that I had refrained from accusing Mrs. White of advocating human vivisection while she was living, and only did so, when, being dead, she could not reply, it is absolutely incorrect. I accused her over four years before her death and she, herself, quickly published two replies to my charge, one in the BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL, and the other in the *Journal of Zoöphily*.

Densmore
pamphlet

Recently, I passed my eighty-fourth birthday. Though Mrs. Lovell does not mention this, she undoubtedly had in mind my impending (and, I may add, *sotto voce*, my undoubtedly welcome) demise. In view of the uncertainty of my life (*sic*), she thinks, before death stills my pen and voice, I ought to retract the statement that Mrs. White advocated human vivisection. On the contrary, I reaffirm it and call the then living Mrs. White as my witness.

Let us see just what Mrs. White *did* say in 1886, in her "Reply" to my address, "Our Recent Debts to Vivisection." Referring to the 20,000 annual deaths from snake bite in India, she proposed that the "experimenters go to India, where they could find as large a field for investigation as they require in the *poor victims themselves*. Here is an opportunity such as is not often afforded of EXPERIMENTING UPON HUMAN BEINGS, since, as they would infallibly die from the snake bites, there *can be no objection* to trying upon them every variety of antidote that can be discovered." (I use italics and capitals not to change the sense, but solely for emphasis.) If I understand the English language, advocating "experimenting on human beings" is flat-footed advocacy of "Human Vivisection." It can mean nothing else.

In the BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL, May 2 and 9, 1912, is printed a later address of my own, entitled "The Influence of Antivivisection on Character." In this address, I quoted Mrs. White's suggestion of 1886 of "experimenting on human beings" bitten by snakes. To this address, Mrs. White herself replied in a 3500 word letter (BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL, July 25, 1912). Let us see what was her own reaction *more than four years before her death* (September 7, 1916) to my quoting her proposal. Did she declare that I was "unscrupulous" and deem it an "aspersion" on her character? Not a bit of it! She not only did not resent my quoting and interpreting her own words, but, after having had twenty-six years to reflect upon her proposal to "experiment upon human beings," she gallantly stood by her guns and defended it! Her own words are (BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL, July 25, 1912): "It does not seem to me that this is a cruel suggestion, as my only object in it was to benefit the poor natives who die by the thousands every year!"

If Mrs. White, while living, did not resent my quot-

ing her own words, as "aspersing" her character, why should Mrs. Lovell and Mr. Logan now so violently resent it?

But let us search a little further and consult the *Journal of Zoöphily* (the former name of what is now *The Starry Cross*), itself the organ of the antivivisectionists themselves. In 1912, Mrs. White was the editor and Mrs. Lovell, as now, "associate editor" of that journal!

In the issue for September, 1912, page 380, I find that Mrs. White's letter, first published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, of July 25, 1912, is reprinted in full, under the title "The Self-defense of an Antivivisectionist." So here, in Mrs. White's and Mrs. Lovell's own *Journal*, Mrs. White failed to resent my suggestion that she favored "experimenting on human beings," but, actually, after years of reflection, defended it.

By entirely omitting any mention of the facts that the address in which I had quoted her was published four years and four months *before* Mrs. White's death, and that she, herself, replied to it in print, not only in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, but in the very journal of which Mrs. Lovell was, and still is, the associate editor,—by ignoring these facts Mrs. Lovell and Mr. Logan give the wholly false impression that my charge that she had made a flat-footed proposal to "experiment on human beings" was not made until after her death when she could not reply. If Mrs. Lovell and Mr. Logan knew of her two replies, they concealed the truth from their readers. If they did not, they were lamentably ignorant of the literature relating to their own business and to the contents of their own journal. In either case, it is they who should make a retraction and offer me an apology for such a misrepresentation.

The outstanding feature of all antivivisection literature, as to medicine, is that they "know it all." My friends and I, who have diligently studied and taught and practised medicine for forty, fifty and sixty years, deplore our ignorance about many things as to which we long for more light. We wish by all possible means, including animal experimentation, to obtain this additional light. We do know enough, however, to say that Mrs. Lovell's oracular statements as to typhoid fever, yellow fever, smallpox, sanitation and the "stupendous folly of germ hunting" are utter nonsense.

"Yellow fever, like typhoid, is a filth disease. Remove the filth and you remove the cause," is one of her bold assertions.

This assertion is not true. They are two diseases, each caused by its own specific "germ" and by nothing else. The fact is, you may live in a filthy hovel and may develop other diseases, but you will not develop typhoid unless there are *typhoid germs* in the food you eat and drink. In the same filthy surroundings, you will *not* develop yellow fever unless there are infected mosquitoes to bite you.

On the contrary, you may live in Mrs. Lovell's own home, with spotless ultra-sanitary surroundings, but if you eat solid food over which have crawled flies with typhoid germs on their little feet, or drink water or milk which has no smell and which looks and tastes and appears to be entirely wholesome but which contain the "germs" of typhoid, you will fall a victim to typhoid. If, in similarly perfect surroundings, you are bitten by an infected mosquito, you will be attacked by yellow fever.

But Mrs. Lovell may say this is exactly the "filth" that she refers to. I grant it at once and point out that this filth is composed of the bacilli of typhoid fever. Mrs. Lovell, if she makes that statement, at once concedes my contention that typhoid fever is caused, not by filth *per se*, but by filth which contains the germs of typhoid.


The *Boston Journal* gave place in its issue of July 11, 1912, to a short letter from Mr. Stephen Coleridge, criticizing my address of 1912, and again, on July 25, 1912, it published Mrs. White's long letter. The editor then said: "It is only just that these two communications should appear in the *Journal*, since the cause of truth is never better served than by the free expression and fair hearing of diverse opinions about it."

As soon as I read Mrs. Lovell's attack upon me, I requested the editor of *The Starry Cross* to allow me equal space for a reply. He curtly "advised" me that "the columns of the *Starry Cross* are not open to articles favoring vivisection, or intended to asperse the memory of its founder."

As *The Starry Cross* refuses to let the light penetrate the minds of its readers, I am asking the courtesy of your columns as you believe that truth is best attained by hearing both sides.

Yours truly,

W. W. KEEN.



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